



Embassy of the United States of America

Public Affairs Office

PRESS RELEASE

Freetown

April 12, 2013

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Sierra Leoneans Participate in Anti-Corruption Workshop in West Africa

FREETOWN, SIERRA LEONE – According to statistics from the African Union (AU), more than \$148 billion is lost to corruption in Africa every year. This amount is equivalent to 25 percent of Africa's gross domestic product (GDP). That is why five Sierra Leoneans participated in an anti-corruption workshop held in Ghana in March.

The five-day workshop was part of the U.S. government's efforts in building credible institutions in West Africa, via the West Africa Cooperative Security Initiative. The initiative addresses the growing threat of transnational organized crime and drug trafficking in West Africa. Fighting corruption is a central priority of U.S. foreign policy, and the United States is committed to building upon the foundation established by the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) by providing technical assistance to equip law enforcement officials with the knowledge and skills to investigate and prosecute public corruption.

From March 11 to 15, the U.S. Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) funded the five-day workshop for investigators and prosecutors from Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Tanzania. Participants from Sierra Leone included the chief of prosecution at the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), lawyer Reginald Fynn, and lawyer Ady Macauley.

The INL-funded, and U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ)-implemented workshop, focused on assisting Sierra Leone and its West African neighbors effectively combat public corruption and related crimes. Participants discussed a variety of topics including investigating corruption and conducting financial investigations; prosecuting corruption and bribery; utilizing international tools and networks; making mutual legal assistance requests; and recovering the proceeds of corruption.

The workshop in March followed an anti-corruption program for Sierra Leone and West Africa held in December 2011. During the 2011 program, participants assessed strengths and weaknesses in Sierra Leone's anti-corruption regime and suggested activities to be undertaken to work toward key goals. The suggested activities called for a substantial progress toward initiating a series of bench/bar conferences designed to improve the relationship between different sectors of the criminal justice system.

For more information about the workshop, go online to http://blogs.state.gov/index.php/site/entry/advancing_fight_against_corruption.

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